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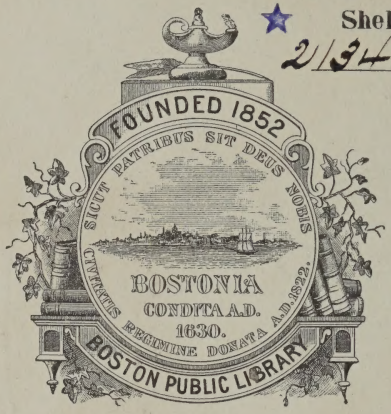

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REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON CIRCULATION

OF THE

Public Library of the City of Boston,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

RESTRICTED BOOKS.

SUBMITTED 21 MARCH, 1865.

Duplic.

B. H.
Nov. 24, 1893

In Board of Trustees of the Public Library,
Boston, September 20, 1864.

Ordered: That the whole subject of the use of books restricted from general circulation, be referred to the Committee on Circulation, to report in writing, whether any modifications of existing orders upon the subject are desirable.

A true copy. Attest:

C. C. JEWETT, *Secretary*.

REPORT.

In Board of Trustees of Public Library,
21 *March*, 1865.

The Committee on Circulation to whom was referred an order in relation to the use of books restricted from general circulation, ask leave to report,* that the only rule now in force relating to the subject is contained in the 12th article of the second chapter of the Rules and Regulations for the use of the Public Library, in the following words, to wit: —

Article 12. Encyclopædias, Dictionaries, and other books needed for reference in the Library building; books not easily to be replaced, in consequence of their rarity or value; books expressly given for reference only; and books deemed by the Trustees to be unsuited for general circulation, shall be used only in the building; provided, nevertheless, that, in order to allow the widest practicable use of the Library consistent with its greatest efficiency, a person desiring to borrow any book whatever, (except such books as may have been given on condition that they should not be taken from the Library,) and stating the reasons for it in writing to the Trustees, shall, if the reasons are deemed sufficient, be permitted to borrow it on proper conditions.

*A Report on the order referred was submitted to the Board of Trustees of the Public Library on the 15th of November, 1864, and on motion of the Chairman was recommitted for further consideration; on the 7th of March, 1865, the Committee was authorized to report in print.

As an assistance and guide for applicants under this rule, the following blank is kept for use:

To the Librarian of the Public Library.

The bearer, residing at No. in Street, is authorized to take out and retain the same for the space of weeks.

Signed, *Committee on Special Permissions.*

The rule is positive in restricting from use all books which heretofore have been deemed necessary to be retained in the Library, and keeps within the Board the whole power of granting special permissions. This power has, in a degree, been delegated to the Superintendent.

In July, 1859, the Superintendent was directed, in preparing the catalogue of books in the Bates Hall, to designate in it, with one distinctive mark, the titles of such books as may have been given on condition that they should not be put into circulation, and with another mark, such as, for sufficient reasons, should not be circulated, except after an application should be made to the Board and be granted; and the preceding blank form was prepared for this purpose. A single star (*), and two stars (**), were selected for the distinctive marks.

There are in the Library about 38,685 books marked with one star, besides the English and American public documents; and about 4,032 books marked with two stars, besides the English Patent Specifications. The single star, it is well known, is intended merely as a warning to the library attendants that the books to which it is attached should not be taken out without permission of the Superintendent. This permission is asked and granted every day; and the reference to the Superintendent does not act as a restriction of books which ought to be taken out for home use, but only operates to keep books from going into improper hands, preventing people from taking out books which they do not want, so that they may be furnished with such as

they actually require, and affording an opportunity also for cautioning persons as to the use of books. The stars were placed upon the books according to the following rules, to wit:

One star (*) upon the following classes:

1. All pamphlets bound in the same volume with other pamphlets.
2. All medical works, except such as are intended for non-professional readers, and are deemed suitable for general circulation.
3. The early printed musical books of the Koudelka Collection.
4. All books of general reference, as encyclopædias, dictionaries of the various languages and sciences, gazetteers, biographical dictionaries, bibliographical works, &c.
5. All scarce books, such as could not be replaced without much cost or delay.
6. All works in several volumes, if the value of the set should exceed about ten dollars.
7. All richly illustrated works.
8. The county and local histories of England.
9. Family memorials and genealogical registers.
10. All maps and charts.

Two stars (**) upon the following:

1. All books given upon express condition that they should not be circulated.

The catalogue when marked was ordered to be reported to the Committee on the catalogue before printing it. This was done, and the whole system has worked well as far as it went; at least no complaints have been heard concerning it.

It is now proposed to have a third class of restricted books which cannot be taken from the building without the special permission of the Trustees or of a committee. This class will comprise books purchased or presented without condition, but such as ought always to be retained in the Library except in

special and urgent cases, when a request for their use should be made in writing by the applicant, and submitted to the Board, at a meeting thereof, or to a special committee, as it might be at times too exclusive to wait for a meeting of the Board for the permission. A suitable mode of designating such books would naturally be by three stars, (***). It will be almost impossible to state the number of books to be thus marked; and perhaps it will suffice for the present if the classes are only designated, for the catalogue has been printed, and cannot well be marked for the use of borrowers; although it would be well for the Superintendent to place the three stars upon such books as soon as may be, and to withhold them from circulation unless by permission from the Trustees or the Committee.

Perhaps the following should have the three stars (***):

1. All books containing manuscript works, records, letters, &c.
2. Such books in the department of bibliography and literary history as are constantly needed by the officers of the library to aid them in their labors.
3. Such books of general reference as are constantly needed not only by the officers of the Library, but by other persons reading in the building, or seeking information on special points, as
   a. The best encyclopædias, both those of a general character, and those relating to different departments.
   b. The best dictionaries and grammars in every language.
   c. The best biographical dictionaries, gazetteers, maps, heraldic works, reference almanacs, directories, and registers, &c.
4. The patent specifications of all nations.
5. Large and costly books of prints, or books containing numerous and expensive illustrations, &c.
6. Very expensive works on natural history and the sciences.
7. Costly illustrated works of travels and descriptions of countries, as county histories, and the narratives of exploring expeditions, (English, French, American, &c.)

8. Every book or other article which may be considered unique or exceedingly rare, or of which it would be impossible or extremely difficult to procure another copy.
9. Every book belonging to a large set, if the volume could not be procured separately, and if the whole set be worth more than fifty dollars.

The Committee recommend that the Superintendent be directed to carry out the above suggestions, which they believe meet with his approbation; and that, after the books have been selected by him in accordance with the views expressed in this Report, he cause one or more copies of the printed catalogue to be marked to designate the books upon which the three stars have been placed. They also recommend that, until otherwise ordered, the granting leave for the use of the books bearing three stars, be intrusted to any two of the several members of the Board, it being understood that when practicable the voice of the whole Board should be preferred to that of two individuals.

The Committee have therefore appended, for the consideration of the Board, the accompanying orders.

Respectfully submitted,

NATH'L B. SHURTLEFF,
P. T. JACKSON,
J. P. BIGELOW.

Ordered, That the Superintendent be directed to mark with three stars (***) such books, which, for greater use and safety, should be under further restriction, carrying out the suggestions of the Report this day presented by the Committee on Circulation; and that he cause to be prepared one or more copies of the printed catalogue, so as to designate the books thus marked.

Ordered, That, until otherwise ordered, no books bearing three stars, shall be allowed to circulate without the written permission of two members of the Board of Trustees.